

**County of Middlesex
Office of Workforce Development
One Stop Operations/WorkFirst Collaborative Meeting
550 Jersey Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 - WIA Conference Room B
June 26, 2014 – 1:30 PM**

Attendees: Adrienne Keaton, George Brokaw, Janice Fishbein, Patricia Foster, Carla Ghee, Christine Granaldi, Sharon Hartman, Wanda Johnson, Julie Piano, John Ross, Miriam Ruiz, Roni Salkin, Jeff Shulman, Michelle Suskind, Timothy Timberlake, Linda Urbach, Kathy Warren, Tina Rose Yuli, Jean Zwingli

Staff: Helina K. Wisniewski, Secretary

Adrienne Keaton called the meeting to order at 1:45 pm.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 27, 2014 One Stop Operations Committee were presented for approval. John Ross made a motion for the approval of the minutes of the March 27, 2014 meeting. Michelle Suskind seconded and the motion carried.

UI Issues – Carla Ghee

The New Brunswick UI office has been unusually slow primarily due to extended benefits being suspended. Many people are coming in inquiring about the availability of an extension because their benefits were exhausted. The majority of the people who come in are asking to reset their password and pin number. In May, 2014 a temporary employee retired. As of now, there are three employees left including Carla. The UI staff cannot make payments at local offices.

The Call Center stops taking calls earlier in the day when they receive an abundance of calls. People are complaining that when calling in, the phone call is disconnected.

Funding for Program Year 2014 - Adrienne Keaton

For Program Year 2014, which started July 1, 2014, we received an increase in WIA funds totaling \$872,000 between the three titles. Adult received an increase of 23.7%, Youth 21.3% and Dislocated Worker 10.7%. The total WIA allocation is \$5,933,834. The number of people we are planning to serve next year will be very similar to this year because there is an increase in overhead costs, including health benefits and rent. WIA is required to spend 80% of the allocation for any given program year during that year. We cannot carry in more than 20% of the allocation in to the following year.

Our enrollment goals were met for Adult and Dislocated Workers in Program Year 2013. There was a concern that we might not reach our enrollment goals due to the fact that UI claimants are no longer entitled to extensions and might not be able to afford to go to school as a result. For those who run out of their UI while they are actively in training, they may be given up to 26 weeks of additional benefits during training (ABT) at the same rate they were collecting while they were on UI.

The State has not notified us officially of what the literacy funding level will be for the Learning Links in PY'14. Unofficially, we were told we could expect to get about the same amount of money we received in PY'13, thus allowing us to keep the Learning Links in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy open.

Literacy/High School Equivalency - Tim Timberlake

The New Brunswick Adult Learning Center has been administering the HSE test since the end of March, 2014. So far, they had 140 testers. There were 214 graduates this year - 30 C.A.R.E.S. High School Program; 184 HSE; 22 Youth Corp; 72 Spanish and 90 English HSE.

The McGraw Hill testing is being completed by pencil and paper, but will be changed to computerized testing in a year and a half. Other testing centers are having issues with their testing, scoring and giving the scores to the wrong testing centers. There is an administrative fee of \$40 which is charged for non- New Brunswick residents. Half of the testers were not New Brunswick residents. The HSE test is given twice a month in English and every six weeks in Spanish.

John Ross mentioned he attended the graduation ceremony which was a very impressive ceremony. Many of these graduates are our clients. There were four speakers and an individual who had an extremely compelling story. A 50 year old woman who spent 24 years trying to get a high school diploma, received her diploma at this year's graduation ceremony. The students and families appreciate all the help NBALC staff and administration have given to them.

WIA – New Legislation - Adrienne Keaton

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 was due for reauthorization since 2003. The Senate passed the new legislation on Wednesday, June 25, 2014 for the new workforce reauthorization bill called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The bill will go back to the House for approval where it is expected to pass without issue. Once it is signed into law, it will go into effect in 2015 with a two year transition plan.

The new bill keeps the basic structure of the workforce system in place and adds provisions to modernize and improve efficiencies. Local control is maintained. There is a stronger emphasis on regional planning and service, career pathways, and the effective use of technology.

Changes to the Workforce Development System:

- 15 Workforce Programs will be eliminated. Most of the programs that were eliminated in this bill were currently unfunded.
- Applies one set of accountability metrics to every federal workforce program under the bill.
- Requires states to produce one strategic plan describing how they will provide training, employment services, adult education and vocational rehabilitation through a coordinated, comprehensive system.
- Reduces the number of required members on state and local workforce boards. WIBs will still be business-led, but will reduce to 33 required partners at the State WIB and 19 on the Local WIB.
- There will be a 90 percent hold harmless provision for adult and youth programs to help protect against wide variations in annual funding levels due to the formula.
- There will be 100 percent transferability between local adult and dislocated worker programs to ensure that local needs are being met.
- Emphasizes access to real-world training opportunities through increasing the use of on-the-job training with reimbursement rates up to 75 percent for eligible employers rather than 50%.
- Requires 75 percent of youth funding to support out-of-school youth, of which 20 percent is *prioritized* for work-based activities.
- Strengthens the connection between adult education, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

WorkFirst Update – John Ross

Contracts have been executed by Middlesex County and the two Vendors that will provide the required Activities for the Work First New Jersey Program for FY-2015. The two Vendors are Middlesex County College and New Brunswick Board of Education/Adult Learning Center. The Contracts that have been executed, address selected areas that all have agreed require improvement. The most notable difference from prior Agreements is the requirement for placement of 75% of TANF Job Search completers into CWEP Worksites at the conclusion of the TANF Job Search Program. This has resulted in additional expenses by Vendors to adjust the ability of the respective staffs to meet this requirement. As a result, both agreements contain increases in the salary and wage categories. The Contracts also return TANF Job Search to a four (4) week cycle instead of the six (6) week cycle it has operated on for the last two years.

The Participation Rate for Middlesex County has increased steadily during the first six months of the current year but remains below the state's average. Increasing the Participation Rate remains a high priority for the County but it requires concerted efforts by all partners to address their respective areas and conditions that impact this rate.

The Transportation Block Grant for FY-2015 remains at the level of funding as in prior years subject to approval of the documents required for approval. Application for Needs Based Funds will be processed though DOLWD to supplement available transportation funds. The County will not provide access to JARC funds as in previous years due to a reduction of transportation funds that are available to the County as well as the needs of the MCAT Shuttles. As a result, the Board of Social Services and the Office of Workforce Development have agreed to new guidelines for eligibility of shared ride services(taxi) which limits the period of time a client can rely on a taxi to address their transportation barrier. The new guidelines also addresses unacceptable participation levels for clients who draw on the most costly services which are not required through Federal/State regulations.

Open Discussion/Other Business

Adrienne Keaton

A Job Fair sponsored by the WIB was held at Middlesex County College on Wednesday, May 28, 2014 from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. There were 35 employers and 335 job seekers.

There will be another job fair in September, 2014. Dan Frankel, previous WIB Chair asked us to hold a job fair in South Brunswick sometime in September to be included in a week of special activities to be scheduled in the township.

Adrienne announced she is retiring as of September 5, 2014. Currently she is the One Stop Manager and the Interim Director of the WIB, as Jane Brandy's replacement has not been selected yet. A meeting notice will be sent out to the members, which will include announcing who the next One Stop System Manager will be.

Adjournment

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 18, 2014, at 1:30pm. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.